

Senator Harry Reid

A Report to Women in Nevada

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Putting Prevention First to Reduce Unintended Pregnancies

The abortion debate has been a divisive one for our nation for many years. But there is a need and an opportunity for us to find common ground and to take steps towards a goal all of us share: reducing the number of unintended pregnancies in America.

Nevada's rate of teen pregnancies is among the worst in the nation. Most of these pregnancies are unintended and many are terminated by abortion, contributing to the high abortion rate in our state.

As a result of medical innovation and pharmaceutical research, numerous forms of safe and highly effective contraceptives are available by prescription. However, one of the greatest obstacles to the usage of prescription contraceptives is the cost. Unfortunately, most health insurance companies do not cover the costly prescription, and as a result, millions of women with and without health insurance are forced to do without contraceptives or bear the out of pocket expense.

Since 1997, I have been trying to remedy this problem, and am again proposing my legislation, known as common sense legislation, which has received bipartisan support. Equity in Prescription Insurance and Contraceptive Coverage, EPICC, requires insurance plans which provide coverage for prescription drugs to provide the same coverage for prescription contraceptives. Contraceptive coverage is much cheaper than other services that most insurance companies routinely cover, including abortions, sterilizations and tubal ligations. Furthermore, Federal Employee Health Benefits Program, which has provided contraceptive coverage for several years, shows that adding such coverage does not make the plan more expensive.

In addition to EPICC, I propose increasing the awareness and availability of Emergency Contraception, also known as EC, an important but underutilized resource.

EC has been studied extensively and is regarded as a safe and effective method to prevent unintended pregnancies. Its use has been recommended by leading medical authorities including the American Medical Association

and the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists and it has been approved by the Food and Drug Administration.

EC could prevent 1.7 million unintended pregnancies and 800,000 abortions in America each year. EC reduces the risk of pregnancy by up to 95 percent.

To reduce unintended pregnancies by raising awareness of EC, Senator Patty Murray (D-WA) and I proposed legislation that authorizes 10 million dollars in funding for the Centers for Disease Control and the Health Resources and Services Administration to develop and distribute information about emergency contraception to public health organizations, health care providers, and the public. Unfortunately, this legislation was defeated in the Senate.

Another important measure we should embrace to improve the health of women and children would expand the State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP) for the full range of health benefits (including prenatal, delivery and postpartum care).



Senator Harry Reid speaks out in support of Title IX at a press conference featuring actress Geena Davis and Olympic gymnast Dominique Dawes.

Although the amendment did not pass this time around, I will continue to fight for the safety and the well-being of Nevada's women and children

Senator Harry Reid Title IX: Defend It Don't End It

While we should be happy with all the progress we have made providing girls and women with opportunities previously denied them, we must continue our efforts to promote gender equality because the job is not complete. And we must also be aware that Title IX programs that have proven so effective in helping girls and women are under assault from critics who would like to turn the clock back.

Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 was the landmark legislation that prohibits sex discrimination in federally funded educational and athletic programs.

Although Title IX has successfully protected and provided opportunities for women over the past thirty years, the Commission on Opportunity in Athletics has recommended that it be altered. If the President agrees with the recommendations of this Commission, he will potentially make severe changes against the will of the Congress, the courts, and most importantly, the American people, women and men alike, who have consistently supported Title IX.

Opponents of Title IX make false claims and perpetuate myths to attack this important law. In reality, nothing in the law or policies requires schools to set aside a certain mandatory number of slots for female athletes. In fact, every court that has heard this argument has said that Title IX does not require quotas. Although one way a school can comply with the law is by ensuring that the

percentage of male and female athletes is about equal to the ratio of men and women in the student body, a school can also comply with Title IX simply by showing that it is trying to expand opportunities for female athletes or that it is accommodating the interests of female students at the school, whatever the number of opportunities it provides.

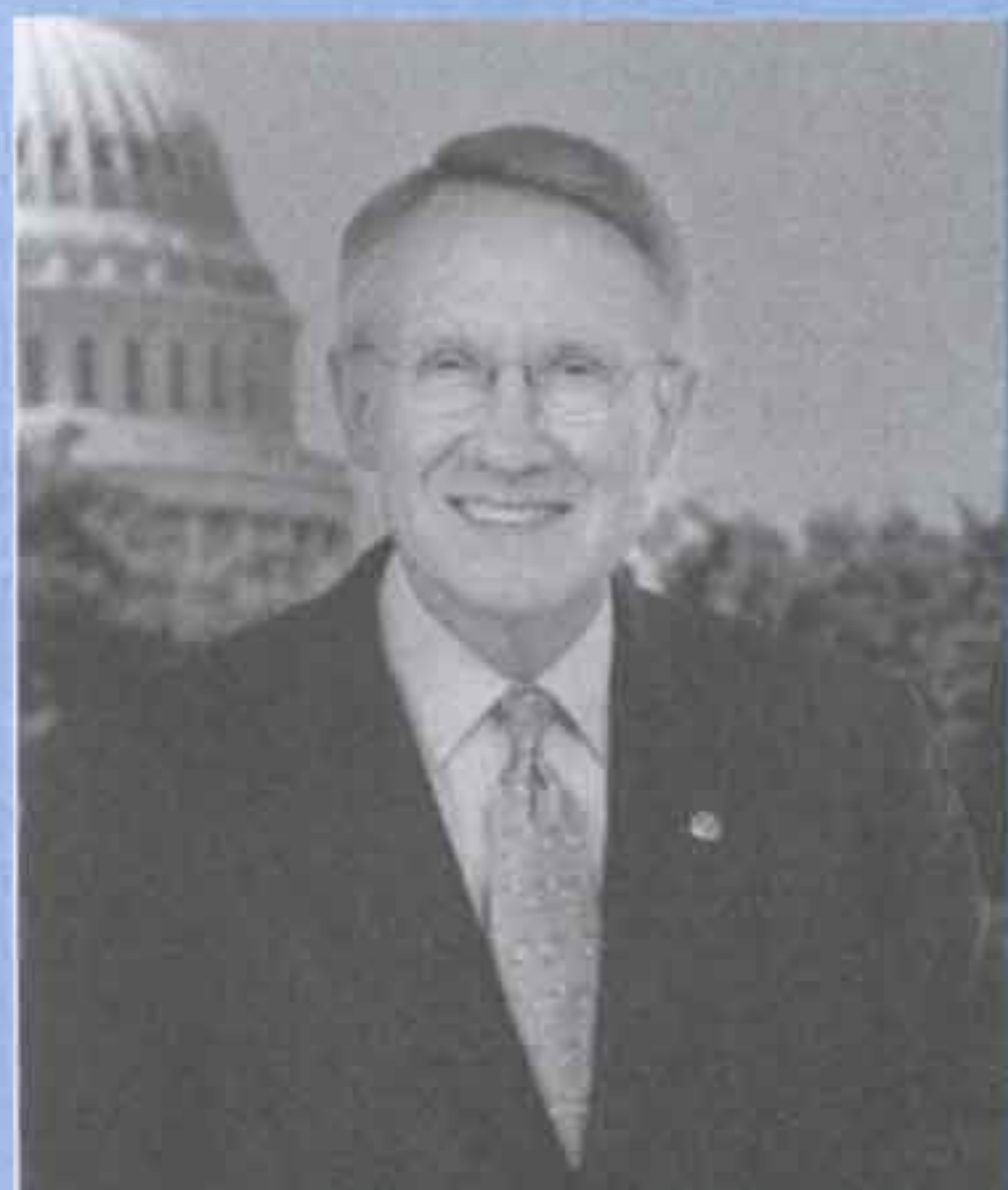
For most Americans Title IX is synonymous with our efforts to provide girls and women an equal opportunity to participate in sports, but Title IX addresses a whole range of important programs and issues related to education.

So while we remain vigilant against attacks on Title IX, we must also push for its continued implementation and enforcement.



Senator Harry Reid and UNLV women's softball pitcher Nicole Truax representing Title IX. Nicole was an intern in Reid's office during the fall semester of 2002.

KEEPING IN TOUCH



Please feel free to contact me or my staff offices with questions or concerns you might have regarding these or any other issues. We value your input and stand ready to work with you.

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